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BOOK REVIEWS AND NOTICES

The Old Colonial System 1660-1754. Part I, "The Establishment of the System, 1660-1688." By GEORGE LOUIS BEER. New York: Macmillan, 1912. 2 vols., 8vo, pp. xvi+381; vii+382. \$4.00 net.

In his *Origins of the British Colonial System 1578-1660* Dr. Beer promised a detailed study of the system during the century following the period of which he was then writing and preceding the period treated in his previous work on *British Colonial Policy 1754-1765*. This promise is now in part fulfilled by the issue of the two volumes making up Part I of the new work. These bear the subtitle "The Establishment of the System" and cover the period 1660 to 1688.

The scope and content of the study are well indicated by the author's definition of the colonial system which he regards as "synonymous with that complex system of regulations whose fundamental aim was to create a self-sufficient commercial empire of mutually complementary economic parts. An understanding of this system must rest primarily upon an analysis of the economic theories then current, mainly in so far as they found expression in the Acts of Trade and Navigation. But these laws by no means constituted the whole system. The scheme of imperial defense was a closely correlated part, and the English fiscal arrangements as well as the method of regulating the slave trade were integrally connected with it" (p. vii). This also involves, we are told, a study of the machinery employed and its efficacy, besides an investigation of the consequences of the policy to the political and economic development of the colonies.

The period of the Restoration, says Dr. Beer, marks the beginning of an era of expansion when the forces working for national growth, sea power, commerce, and colonies, checked since the time of Elizabeth, were once more set free. By this time, however, the attitude as to population had changed, emigration was no longer favored, and the colonies were looked upon, not as an outlet for surplus population, but simply as feeders for English commerce. Thus there was an added reason for favoring tropical colonies, since, besides producing things not grown in England, they required only a relatively small amount of white

labor, used simply to supervise the slaves. The New England colonies, on the other hand, were of no advantage in a system with such aims, and they were kept only to prevent them falling into the hands of others.

The "economic framework" of the old colonial system is to be found in the Navigation Act of 1660, the Staple Act of 1663, and the Plantation Duty Act of 1673. Except for the enumeration clause these were very largely based on precedent. The system, moreover, was similar to that of other countries and the principles on which it was based were supported with "substantial unanimity" by the economists of the day. If repugnant to modern economic, political, and ethical ideas, says Dr. Beer, departing for the moment, and with inadequate discussion, from his purely historical attitude, it must be remembered that "these modern ideas are largely the result of changed conditions and were totally inapplicable in the seventeenth century, when they would have seemed, and correctly so, merely the vagaries of an unpractical utopian out of touch with the forces that were making history" (p. 107). To show further that the system was by no means one-sided, there is carefully pointed out the gain to the colonies through protection against the Barbary pirates and others and through the prohibition of tobacco-growing and the various devices for preferential treatment of colonial products in England.

A detailed consideration of the revenues derived from the various colonies leads to the conclusion that "prior to 1689 the English Treasury derived virtually no direct income from the colonies, and that the revenue which accrued to the Crown in its various capacities was practically in its entirety devoted to colonial purposes" (p. 202). Moreover, the policy of the English government to make each colony bear its own local expenses had worked out by 1688 so that, aside from the costs of imperial defense, the colonies were but a slight burden on the mother country.

This commercial legislation assumed increased political significance when it was found that its efficient administration necessitated the appointment by the Crown of a considerable group of officials resident in the colonies, and that it thus led to the intrusion of royal officials in colonial affairs. Three different departments of the home government became thus involved. The Privy Council and its committees having general supervision of colonial affairs found a responsible representative necessary. Inability to secure conviction by jury trial forced the Admiralty to establish its own courts in the colonies. Finally, the Treasury learned that it must also have its officials on the ground to safeguard the revenue, especially in connection with the enumerated

commodities and the Plantation Duties Act of 1673. The abolition of the system of farming the revenue and the transfer of many colonies to the Crown further increased this body of officials. The triple system of administration thus evolved was a constant source of disputes, especially in the crown colonies, where, however, the wrangles were largely personal in character as contrasted with those in the proprietary colonies which were due more to a feeling that the colonies' rights were being invaded by this outside body of officials.

The dependence of the valuable tropical colonies on slave labor made the control and regulation of the slave trade appear as an essential part of the colonial system. Consequently the Restoration period is marked by a determined effort to secure a considerable portion of this trade. This, however, led to constant disputes between the planters and the Royal African Company over the supply and price of slaves.

Having thus described the commercial legislation, its administration, and its fiscal aspects, the author turns in Vol. II to a description of the conditions in the various colonies in the West Indies and on the Continent, an account of the colonists' attitude toward the laws, and a statement of the results which followed from them.

At this period the richest and most important colony in America from the imperial point of view was Barbados. By 1660 its resources were well developed, though the rest of the Leeward Islands were still in a very primitive state. As a result they complained against the laws of trade much less than Barbados, since they grew up under the system and only after the fall in the price of sugar had already taken place. Much the same was true of Jamaica, in the development of which the Restoration government took great interest. In all of these islands the Navigation Laws were reasonably well enforced. The Bermudas were fairly prosperous, though not without grievances, while the Bahamas were little more than a haunt for pirates.

In Virginia the advantages and disadvantages of the system were so evenly balanced as to prevent serious objection. The chief trouble was caused by inability to limit the tobacco crop, insufficient protection against the Indians, and an inequitable system of taxation. Finally all attempts to divert the colony from tobacco were abandoned owing to the large revenue derived from that crop. In Maryland conditions were essentially the same, and in both colonies the laws were well observed. At this period the Carolinas were of little economic importance, though the process of settlement there was typical of the ideals underlying the colonial policy.

In Newfoundland under the influence of the Western Adventurers, settlement was discouraged until 1675, when that policy was reversed, on its being shown that settlers were really of advantage to the English fishermen, and that the development of fisheries as a source of commercial and naval strength, always the real objective of the government, would be furthered thereby. Nevertheless, this was a period when France was gaining in the fisheries more rapidly than England.

At the time of the Restoration but little was expected of the northern colonies on the mainland. New England always failed to fit into the imperialistic scheme and hence "its political connection with England was always a disturbing factor interfering with the plans of the English government," a situation which finally, under favorable conditions, led to the disruption of the old commercial empire (p. 235), and may be likened, it is suggested, to the relation between Rome and her colony of Gaul. Massachusetts persisted in violating the Navigation Laws and practically denied the authority of Parliament. This opposition was not based primarily on economic grounds, for the Navigation Laws only slightly checked Massachusetts in her industrial activity, but was founded rather on the political consequences involved in recognizing the authority of those laws. For this same reason England could not longer avoid the issue, and the abrogation of the charter became inevitable if the empire was to continue. Much the same explanation applies to the trend of events in the other northern colonies and the movement which finally led to the establishment of the Dominion of New England.

The general theory as to the interpretation and effect of the British colonial system here outlined will at once be recognized as that presented in the author's earlier works. Its value and suggestiveness have already been widely recognized. The important contribution of these two volumes is to be found in the full and elaborate support of that theory given by their detailed study of the British policy and its effect upon colonial politics and commerce as they worked out during the period of the Restoration. That this has been carried out with great thoroughness and the best scholarship is sufficiently guaranteed by the author's name.

But the feature of this particular study which stands out in the mind of the reviewer as of especial significance is the light thrown upon American colonial history by placing alongside it a study of the British commercial policy and its effects as seen in the other American colonies of Great Britain, particularly the West Indies. In a notice of the author's preceding volume the reviewer expressed the wish that this field of industrial history might receive more attention, and it is with no

slight satisfaction that he finds his hopes so completely realized in the results here obtained by Dr. Beer. (Professor Mims's recent volume is suggestive in a similar way, though the connection of the French West Indies is of course less direct.) Certainly no one can read these volumes without a feeling that the history of the American colonies on the mainland has too long been written as if they were an isolated group. It is time to realize the far-reaching importance of West Indian history for securing a broad understanding and interpretation of the political as well as the economic life of the continental colonies, to say nothing of the relation of the whole group to the British empire. We can ask no better than that the remainder of the colonial period be covered as successfully as that of the Restoration.

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Panama Canal Traffic and Tolls. By EMORY R. JOHNSON. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1912. 4to, pp. vi+490.

This report by Professor Johnson is made pursuant to a request by the secretary of war "to bring up to as late a date as practicable the data contained in the *Report of the Isthmian Canal Commission* for 1899-1901, and also to formulate rules and regulations governing the measurement of ships going through the canal, and to make an investigation and recommendation regarding the tolls to be charged." The report on the measurement of vessels is deferred to a second volume, which is in course of preparation.

Included in this report is much useful data which do not bear directly upon the Panama Canal but should be mentioned before the report proper is taken up. Four chapters (54 pages) are devoted to the Suez, Kaiser Wilhelm, Manchester, and Amsterdam canals respectively. There are eight appendices, covering in all 258 pages. Of these, Appendix I (164 pages) is a reprint of Professor Johnson's "Report on the Industrial and Commercial Value of the Isthmian Canal" from *Report of the Isthmian Canal Commission*, 1899-1901; the others contain abstracts of laws relating to tolls and charges on the leading ship canals of the world, and the much-discussed Panama Canal act of August 24, 1912.

Discussion of the Panama Canal has centered mainly around the following questions:

1. What is the amount of traffic available for the canal?
 2. What tolls should be charged?
 3. Should American coastwise traffic be exempt from tolls?
- What light does this report shed upon these main questions?